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ABSTRACT

In this booklet a licensed guide assists young blind people in learning fishing techniques, tips from a blind fisherman are offered, and a selected listing of recorded and braille books and magazines about fishing are provided. (PB)

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FISHING

An Introduction to Fishing for Fun and Food for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals

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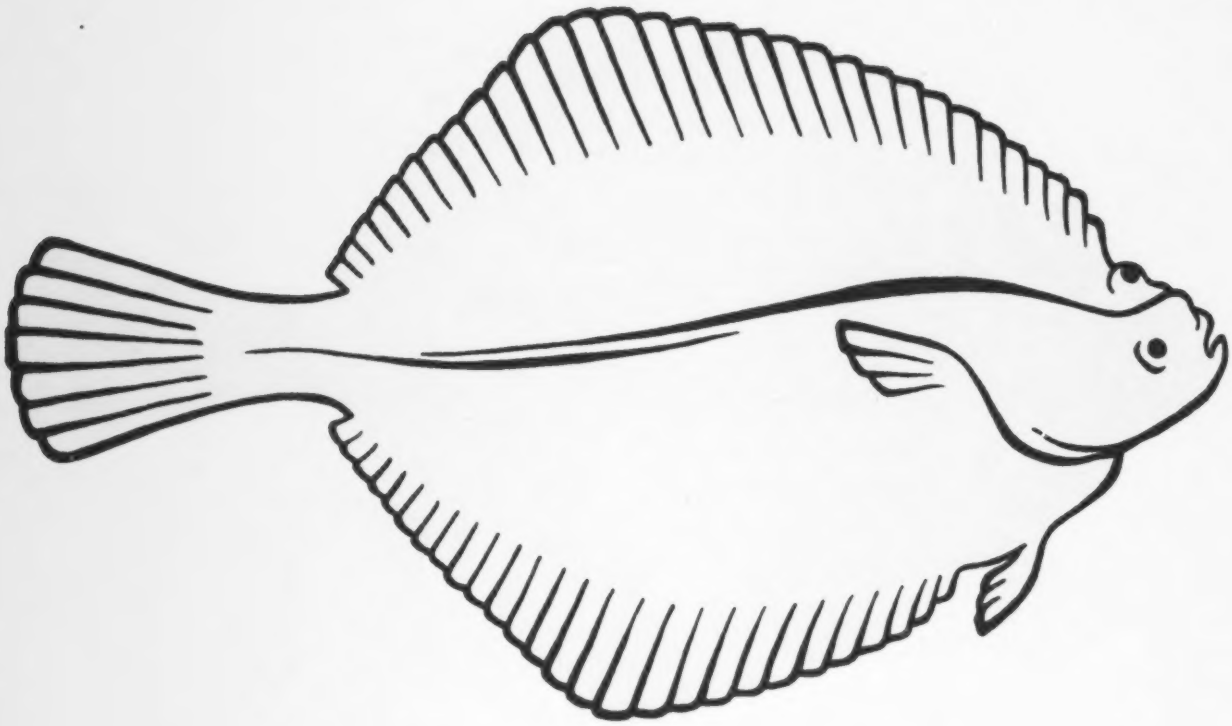

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Introduction

More than thirty thousand species of fish inhabit fresh and saltwater areas on our globe. It is estimated that each year nearly one hundred and fifty million residents of the United States fish as a recreational activity; many hundreds fish as an occupation; and hundreds of thousands do not actively angle but enjoy reading about the sport.

Fish may be caught by trolling, casting, and still fishing. Even more may be held in the mind through reading.

The following pages will introduce you to the experience of a blind fisherman, explain how a licensed guide assists young blind people in learning the techniques of fishing, and provide a selected list of recorded and braille books and magazines about fishing for your perusal.

Successful anglers know where the fish are at any given time and season, how to hook them, and, most important, how to describe the actual landing of the catch. Blind and physically handicapped anglers can share these experiences and, indeed, many do. So, go forth and fish—

Frank Kurt Cylke
Editor

Washington, D.C.
November 1988

Fishing Techniques for the Blind

by Paul Filpus

I have enjoyed the sport of fishing almost as far back as I can remember. After losing my eyesight in a car accident at the age of twenty-nine, I found that I could still enjoy the sport. During those first few weeks of adjustment, it was good therapy for me to go fishing. Many other successes followed, of course, but fishing has remained a leading spare-time activity for the eighteen years I have been blind.

I have found it helpful to line up a sighted partner whenever I go fishing. Perhaps a blind person could fish alone in familiar settings, like off a pier, but I don't recommend it. It is just not safe to be near water without a sighted person nearby. Most sighted fishermen don't like to go out alone, anyway, so we aren't really imposing on them. I feel free to call a number of friends whenever I want to set up a fishing trip. My two sons, ages nine and twelve, are also becoming good fishing buddies for me.

Fishing is not expensive. To get started, all you need is a rod and reel, some hooks and sinkers, live bait, and possibly a fishing license. Both of the states in which I fish, Indiana and Michigan, permit legally blind residents to fish without licenses. You can find out your state's regulations by contacting the nearest sporting goods store or bait shop that issues fishing licenses. If required, an annual resident fishing license will likely cost around ten dollars; nonresident licenses usually cost at least twice as much. Fishermen normally share other costs, such as live bait and boat rental or launch; these costs amount to only a few dollars per trip.

For the beginner, going after panfish is a good way to start. Some common species in this broad category are bluegills, crappies, perch, and bass. Use light tackle; I prefer a Johnson Century spincast reel fitted with four- or six-pound test monofilament line. I like the spincast, a closed-face spinning reel, because it is the most tangle-free. Large, open-face spinning and bait-casting reels work quite well but are not designed for the small lures and live bait used in catching panfish. A rod five or six feet in length, a good choice for a beginner, and a spincast reel can be bought at a discount or sporting goods store for around thirty dollars.

Learning to tie line to hooks or lures is a necessary skill to develop: Losing hooks on snags, rocks, or big fish makes retying necessary. When a hook is lost, a fisherman needs to be able to tie a new one on quickly, to be able to take advantage of fast action before it slows down. There are a number of good knots, but I have found one I can tie with ease.

I begin by holding the hook or lure in my left hand and the line in my right. (A left-handed person would switch this procedure.) I thread the line through the hook, leaving a three-inch tail sticking out. Next, I place a finger of my left hand on top of the eye of the hook between the tail and the line itself. I then wrap the tail around the line six or seven times. After

that, I put the tip of the tail through the loop created by the finger of my left hand; I complete the knot by pulling the tail until the six or seven wraps stack neatly and tightly against the eye of the hook. I then trim off the tail close to the knot with nail clippers or a knife.

The biggest challenge in tying knots, threading the line through the eye of the hook, is easier if you use a needle threader—a little wire loop that pulls the line through the eye. Finally, you need to add split-shot sinkers to the line and pinch them shut with a pair of small pliers. You can bait the hook with worms, insect larvae, or minnows quite easily by feel.

Normally, a good set-up for catching panfish consists of a No. 10 hook, one split-shot sinker, and a bobber. A good place to fish is just outside the weedbed of a small lake. Anchor the boat in a spot where the fishermen can comfortably cast their bait to the edge of the weedbed. When a fish bites, the bobber "bobs" to signal a nibble. The fisherman then quickly gives a little tug on the line to set the hook in the fish's jaw and reels it in. If the hook does not set properly, the fish will drop the bait and move on. However, a blind person can use a bobber only if the sighted partner tells him or her when there is a nibble. Using a bobber for crappies or bass can be successful because they take the bait and hold on to it longer. With perch or bluegills, however, the bobber method works poorly.

Rather than using a bobber, a blind person should fish "tightline," a method that enables him or her to feel a biting fish. There are two ways to fish tightline: First, tie the hook to the end of the line and fasten a split-shot sinker or two to the line about a foot from the hook. After baiting the hook, lower it into the water until the sinkers hit bottom. You will feel when this happens because the line goes slack. Then reel the line up about eighteen inches, which brings the bait about six inches off the bottom. This method works well when the water is at least five feet deep and somewhat murky.

A second method of tightline fishing works best in shallow, clear water where fish can see the boat and tend to move away from it. For this set-up, tie a small, bell-shaped sinker to the end of the line, then tie a hook to a tail of another six-inch line and add the tail to the main line about three feet above the sinker. Bait the hook and cast the line away from the boat just as with the bobber method. When the sinker hits the bottom, reel in the slack, which brings the bait just above the bottom. A nibble can be felt easily with this set-up.

Once hooked, a fish can be brought into the boat quite easily by slowly but steadily reeling the fish to the surface of the water near the boat and lifting it in over the side. If the fish is a large one, however, do not lift it out of the water by pulling on the line because doing so might

break the line. When you hook a big one, tell your partner to get the landing net ready to dip the fish out of the water when you get it near the boat.

A common mistake is trying to get a good-sized fish into the boat too quickly. The main things to remember are to keep the line taut and the rod tip high and to let the fish play itself out. The drag on your reel should be set so that if a fish pulls hard, line will play out from the reel. When the fish stops its run, reel it back toward the boat. This action will soon tire the fish so it can be landed.

Removing the hook is easy once you have the fish firmly in hand. To grasp the fish properly, slide your hand down the line then just past the head. Your hand will move in a head-to-tail direction causing the fins to lie down under your hand. If you don't do it this way, the sharp bones in the fins may prick your hand a little. With a firm hold on the fish, you can then remove it from the hook and put it in your fish basket or release it.

After mastering the art of panfishing, you may want to try some other methods, such as casting or trolling for northern pike, walleyes, trout, or salmon. These techniques involve using artificial bait such as spoons, spinners, and jigs. Perhaps you'll want to cast for smallmouth bass while wading in a stream or fish off the bank for catfish. Unless there are overhead tree limbs or snags in the water, a blind person can perform any of these techniques effectively. Further, many fish are nocturnal feeders so fishing at night can be productive. Blindness can even be an asset in night fishing.

Adult Nonfiction

Discs

Silent Seasons: Twenty-one Fishing Adventures by Seven American Experts RD 14016

edited by Russell Chatham

Seven distinguished writers recollect with wit and exuberance their experiences in the pastime of fishing. Thomas McGuane, Jim Harrison, and Jack Curtis are among the contributors.

Zane Grey, Outdoorsman: Zane Grey's Best Hunting and Fishing Tales Published in Commemoration of His Centennial Year RD 6098

by Zane Grey

Stories that tell of pursuing bear in Arizona, chasing whales in Australia, trolling for amberjack and sailfish in the South Seas, and struggling over rugged Colorado trails.

Bright Rivers RD 11393

by Nick Lyons

An English professor with a passion for trout fishing tells of sharing moving and humorous experiences with his angling friends. Also recounts memorable fishing trips to the Delaware, the Beaverkill, the Schoharie, the Madison, and the Big Hole rivers.

The Grasshopper Trap FD 22976

by Patrick F. McManus

Presents thirty humorous essays on the perils of the sporting life. McManus writes with dry wit about the mishaps and hardships endured by zealous but inept outdoorsmen. He suggests that bungling should always be done with aplomb and tells how to fall down with finesse or feign bravery when lost in the woods.

They Shoot Canoes, Don't They? RD 17553

by Patrick F. McManus

Tongue-in-cheek tales about a sportsman's life. McManus celebrates the hidden pleasures and the opportunities for disaster in the recreations of camping, hunting, and fishing. Amusing accounts of his dog Strange and an incorrigible old woodsman, Rancid Crabtree, are included.

Vermont River RD 24023

by W.D. Wetherell

Collection of essays, frequently autobiographical, loosely centered around the unnamed New England river by which the author now resides. These graceful, frank pieces focus on ordinary experiences by a young fisherman obsessed by the elusive trout and the elusive word.

Cassettes

Hill Country RC 12168
by Gene Hill
Essays about outdoor life and adventures. Included are musings on duck, pheasant, and quail shooting; salmon and trout fishing; guns and tackle; and skeet and trap shooting.

My Moby Dick RC 13222
by William Humphrey
Humorous account of the novelist's season-long pursuit of a one-eyed, very old, forty-two-inch fighting trout that he first saw by accident on a lone fishing hike.

A Fine and Pleasant Misery RC 15102
by Patrick F. McManus
Twenty-seven humorous sketches that originally appeared in *Field and Stream.* Dealing primarily with camping reminiscences, they poke fun at some of the author's experiences with an inept, wacky hunting dog, intruding cows, and a national park.

Never Sniff a Gift Fish RC 20119
by Patrick F. McManus
Tongue-in-cheek tales of a sportsman's life in the great and often not-so-great outdoors. McManus writes from his considerable experience of the agonies and ecstasies of hunting, fishing, and camping.

The Boat and the Town RC 15127
by Geoffrey Moorhouse
Portraits of a New England fishing village and those who earn their living from the sea. Based on a year in which the author worked as a deckhand aboard the fishing boats, sharing the crew members' home life as well as the dangers and comradeship of life at sea.

The Experts' Book of Freshwater Fishing RC 16143
edited by Steve Netherby
The nation's leading anglers each contribute a chapter about fishing for their favorite freshwater denizen.

Reflections of a Fishing Parson RC 7835
by Jonathan C. Sams
Retelling his fishing experiences, the chaplain of a Chicago home for delinquent boys concludes that the mystery of fishing brings man closer to the wonder of creation.

Braille

Tight Lines and Dragonflies BR 1924
by Stephen Ormsby Hughes
Anecdotes and reflections on fishing escapades in and around some fast water streams of Africa and Europe.

Adult Fiction

Discs

In Trout Country TB 3867
edited by Peter Corodimas
Essays and short stories dealing with trout fishing.

The Fish Can Sing TB 1804
by Halldor Kiljan Laxness
In this story about simple fisherfolk near the turn of the century, young Alfgrim learns of the difference between the standards of the outside world and the unworldly, honorable values of his people when a celebrated singer, born in the village, returns. By the Icelandic Nobel Prize-winner.

Trout Magic RD 9327
by Robert Traver
The author, who admits to a lifelong passion for trout, has compiled assorted wit, wisdom, and anecdotes of trout fishing including tall tales, strange happenings, and all-around fishing lore.

Cassettes

The River Why RC 19440
by David James Duncan
Captivating and exuberant tale told by Gus Orviston, flyfishing genius and son of Henning Orviston, a stuffy, world-famous flyfishing writer, and his rip-snorting cowgirl wife. Gus tells of his adventures with a woman, a river, many trout, several dogs, a philosopher, a salmon, and a colorful cast of backwoods characters. Strong language.

Iceland Fisherman RC 15205
by Pierre Loti
First publishing in 1886, this work by the French author reflects his fondness for the sea and all its moods. The hero of this tale is Yann, sturdy but wayward, and the girl Gaud, simple and complex by turns. Relates the hardships and dangers of the Breton fisherfolk in their perilous life on the northern seas.

Children's Fiction

Cassettes

Ride the Cold Wind RC 11683
by Anico Surany
A little Peruvian llama herder longs to be a fisherman like his father. When he disobeys his father by taking the boat out to catch a great, mysterious fish, a near-tragedy proves that he is not yet ready for his dream. For grades K-3.

I Want to Be a Fisherman RC 16050
by Sandra Weiner
An eleven-year-old girl who often works alongside her father, a fisherman, describes the hard work of preparing for

the day, setting up nets, hauling in the catch, and cleaning the fish to ship to market. A vivid account of a young girl's love for her father and the sea. For grades 3-6.

Braille

McElligot's Pool BR 2367
by Dr. Seuss
In verse form, the imaginings of a boy who continues to fish in a certain pool despite warnings that it contains no fish. He conjures visions of improbable catches and colorful ridiculous sea creatures. For grades K-3.

Li-Lun, Lad of Courage BR 1782
by Carolyn Treffinger
A Chinese boy refuses to become a fisherman because he is afraid of the sea, but later proves his courage by completing the almost impossible task which his angry father sets for him. For grades 4-7.

Handbooks

Discs

Fishing with Ray Bergman TB 3307
by Ray Bergman
Some of the best columns by the late angling editor of *Outdoor Life*. Gives advice on nearly all methods of fishing, including major freshwater species, carp, catfish, and trout.

Outdoorsman's Handbook TB 4177
by Clyde Ormond
edited by Henry Gross
A compact handbook that includes practical tips and techniques for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, backpacking, and caring for horses.

Cassettes

Fishing with McClane: 30 Years of Angling with America's Foremost Fisherman RC 9667
by Albert Jules McClane
edited by George Reiger
Compilation of articles, stories, tips, insights, and observations by the longtime fishing editor of *Field and Stream*.

The Complete Beginner's Guide to Fishing RC 9464
by George X. Sand
Basics on fresh and saltwater fishing for the novice and the more experienced fishermen. Covers rod and tackle, knots, natural baits and artificial lures, clothing, different types of fishing, and cleaning and cooking fish.

Bait for Trout RC 7875
by James Ure
Description of the habits and environments of the six primary species of trout. Tells how to use baits.

Periodicals

Discs

Subscriptions to the following magazines on flexible disc are available on request to your regional library or the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20542.

Outdoor Life
monthly
Adventures and experiences of hunters and fishermen; information on conservation and game laws; reports on sporting equipment and techniques.

Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine
monthly
Fiction about animals and articles on nature activities for ages 7-12. Published by the National Wildlife Federation. Packaged with *Jack and Jill*.

Cassettes

The following magazine is available in cassette format only from the producer. Write to the address given in the description.

The Natural Environment
monthly
From Recorded Periodicals, Division of Associated Services for the Blind, 919 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107: $40.00/year; $20.00/year if cassettes are returned. Selections from *International Wildlife, National Wildlife, Animal Kingdom, Oceans, Oceanus,* and others.

The following periodicals are available in cassette format from the regional library that produces them. Write directly to the address given.

Florida Sportsman
Florida Division of Blind Services
Bureau of Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
P.O. Box 2299
Daytona Beach, FL 32015

Fred Trost's Outdoor Digest
Michigan Out-of-Doors
Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Library of Michigan
Box 30007
Lansing, MI 48909

North Dakota Outdoors
South Dakota Conservation Digest
South Dakota State Library for the Handicapped
State Library Building
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

Fishing Tips from a Montana Guide

by Fred J. Bischoff

In 1973, the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind established a summer program at Flathead Lake for our blind students. One half of our day was spent on generic academic skills—braille, abacus, O/M, and low-vision aids—and the other half of the day was for social and recreational activities.

As the recreational program progressed, I noticed that some of the kids wanted more than the usual swimming, diving, boating, and canoeing activities. On the list titled "What to Bring to Camp" was fishing gear, but only a few campers brought any or seemed interested in using what they did bring. Mom or Dad saw it on the list and dutifully sent it along with the child.

I thought to myself that I should put my guiding and outfitting experience to use, so I announced that those kids who really wanted to learn to catch fish should meet me at the dock with their fishing gear.

After dinner that evening about a half a dozen kids showed up with quite an amazing array of tackle. To say the least, I was a little overwhelmed but finally succeeded in stringing rods, baiting hooks, attaching bobbers, and, in some cases, even casting. As accustomed as I was to taking care of my campers, I was not mentally or physically able to dodge and bait the hooks of six young blind fisherman on a small dock.

Two things became obvious: First, the kids got bored or frustrated with the lack of fish, line tangles, and their inability to tie certain knots. Second, I needed to be more systematic if these young anglers were ever going to enjoy this wonderful form of recreation.

As a result of that first attempt, I have developed a few concepts and techniques that can help any blind person enjoy fishing. As most of you know, there are as many ways of catching fish as there are people trying to catch them. So I start by trying to modify the style that the fisherman is most familiar with. If people want to use flies, why frustrate them with fly fishing equipment when they are familiar with spin fishing equipment? By using a casting bubble on the end of your line, you can attach flies to a dropper and still use your spinning rod and reel and fish with flies. Later, after some success, if people still want to learn how to use a fly rod, they probably have the dedication and willingness to attempt that type of fishing. This technique may also solve the problem associated with fishing a brushy stream.

If the blind angler is familiar with trolling tackle and techniques, how can you modify things to allow independent fishing? You might consider wrapping a one-eighth inch of the lead trolling line with a 1- to 2-pound test leader at ten-foot intervals or at the color changes. Thus you can estimate the depth by counting the leader knots.

The elements that make for a good fishing experience are (1) catching fish;

(2) staying warm and comfortable; (3) fishing independently, that is, tying your own knots, baiting your own hooks, and casting your own tackle; and (4) enjoying the natural surroundings, like feeling the warmth of the rising sun or the coolness of the approaching evening, listening to the birds or the sounds of the day, and perhaps enjoying the company of a fishing partner.

I believe that most fishing tackle and techniques can be modified so that a blind angler can fish independently. By fishing independently the angler has time to enjoy the other elements that make fishing enjoyable recreation. Here are some tips and techniques that may make fishing pleasurable for a blind angler:

1. When setting a hook with jigs, flies, or single-hooked lures, snap the rod back sharply with your wrist to drive the hook into the fish's jaw. Too much force will often just jerk the fish's head around.

2. Keep hooks sharp by using a grooved hook honer. After fishing, leave your tackle box open to dry out any moisture and thus prevent rust from corroding hooks and tackle.

3. Keep small items such as hooks, split shot, swivels, and flies in small labeled containers in your tackle box. Organize and label your tackle.

4. Cut all but the top three to four inches off a five-gallon plastic bucket. Drill one-quarter-inch holes every two to three inches around the top and lace in a burlap sack. After catching a fish, drop the hooked fish into the burlap bucket. Grab fish from the outside of the burlap to remove the hook. This technique will provide a firm, dry grip on the fish to ease hook removal. The burlap folds around the fish will keep it from flopping around and possibly being lost. You may also replace the lid and use the bucket as a live well.

5. Practice tying knots! A good basic knot for tying flies, lures, swivels, or hooks to line or leader is the Palomar knot which is described in *McClane's New Standard Fishing Encyclopedia and International Angling Guide* by Albert Jules McClane (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974). A wire needle threader may be useful for threading the leader through the eye of the hook.

6. Orient yourself to water flow, bank vegetation, docks, and other physical surroundings using quarter quadrants—one-quarter, one-half, three-quarters.

7. When ice fishing with a tip-up, attach a large flag or small bell to alert you to a strike.

8. When trolling and using a rod holder, place a bell on the tip or first guide to alert you to a strike.

9. Carry a small towel to keep your hands dry and warm.

10. Use fingerless fishing gloves. Wool tends to be slippery but leather palms will help provide a good grip.

11. Snell your bait hooks or flies ahead of time and store them carefully by wrapping them around a piece of cardboard, or

by placing them individually in a labeled "zip-closing" plastic bag. Be sure to use a loop knot on the end to make them easy to attach to leader or line.

12. After casting your bait with a bobber, slowly reel in your line until you can feel a slight pull. In this way you will have a tight line so you can detect a strike.

13. Use removable split shot, which is tactually easier to use than nonremovable split shot.

14. Relax and enjoy yourself and your companions. Some days the fish don't bite, but you can still have a good time.

I hope this article stimulates blind people to pursue fishing. Remember National Fishing Week and take a kid fishing.

Note: It is possible for blind anglers to tie their own flies and jigs or make their own lures. If anyone is interested in this hobby within a hobby, I would be happy to share my experiences. Contact me at 332 East Central, Missoula, MT 59801 or call (406) 549-1880.

Print Sources and Miscellaneous Activities

Equipment Catalogs

Don Kreb's Access to Recreation; Adaptive Recreation Equipment for the Physically Challenged
2509 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Suite 430
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

Products to Assist the Disabled Sportsman
J.L. Pachner, Ltd.
P.O. Box 93
Lake Zurich, IL 60047

Magazine

Disabled Outdoors Magazine
5223 South Lorel Avenue
Chicago, IL 60638
A print publication for disabled sportsmen including feature articles as well as news notes.

Directory

Sports, Games, and Outdoor Recreation for Handicapped Persons
A Reference Circular (#83-3) prepared by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped listing a variety of activities including fishing. There is a list of camping facilities, wilderness programs, sources of equipment and similar material. The booklet is available in print and on flexible disc. Order from Reference Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Washington, DC 20542.

Miscellaneous

Blind Fishing Tournament
Pennsylvania Association for the Blind
566 East Maiden Street
Washington, PA 15301

Disabled Veterans Wilderness Retreat
S.R. 1
Box 3420
Ely, MN 55731

Physically Challenged Outdoorsmen's Association
3006 Louisiana Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44109

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1. Complete form and enclose in an envelope.
2. Do not seal envelope. Tuck the flap in.
3. Address envelope to your cooperating library.
4. In place of stamp, write "Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped."

Fishing

Talking Books

- ❑ TB 1804
- ❑ TB 3307
- ❑ TB 3867
- ❑ TB 4177

Discs

- ❑ RD 6098
- ❑ RD 9327
- ❑ RD 11393
- ❑ RD 14016
- ❑ RD 17553
- ❑ FD 22976
- ❑ RD 24023

Cassettes

- ❑ RC 7835
- ❑ RC 7875
- ❑ RC 9464
- ❑ RC 9667
- ❑ RC 11683
- ❑ RC 12168
- ❑ RC 13222
- ❑ RC 15102
- ❑ RC 15127
- ❑ RC 15205
- ❑ RC 16050
- ❑ RC 16143
- ❑ RC 19440
- ❑ RC 20119

Braille

- ❑ BR 1782
- ❑ BR 1924
- ❑ BR 2367

*U.S. G.P.O. 1988-241-437:80030

Fishing
CMLS
P.O. Box 9150
Melbourne, FL 32902-9150

Free Matter for the
Blind or Handicapped